

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07  
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15  
USIA-06 COME-00 EB-07 LAB-04 SIL-01 /070 W  
-----182144Z 067892 /64

R 181834Z MAY 77  
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2995  
INFO AMCONSUL BORDEAUX  
AMCONSUL LYON  
AMCONSUL MARSEILLE  
AMCONSUL NICE  
AMCONSUL STRASBOURG

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 PARIS 14822

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PINT, FR  
SUBJECT: VIEWS OF PRIME MINISTER'S ADVISOR ON FUTURE  
POLITICAL STRATEGY

SUMMARY. ONE OF PRIME MINISTER BARRE'S CLOSEST ADVISORS GAVE US A DECIDEDLY UPBEAT REACTION TO THE TV DEBATE OF MAY 12 AND OUTLINED HOW THIS EVENT FITS INTO THE PRIME MINISTER'S POLITICAL STRATEGY FOR THE NEXT 10 MONTHS AND BEYOND. BARRE PLANS TO TAKE THE INITIATIVE IN TWO TIME-FRAMES: FROM NOW UNTIL THE FALL BY MEANS OF A NUMBER OF IMPORTANT SPEECHES MADE DURING REGIONAL VISITS IN FRANCE; AND IN THE FALL WITH THE PRESENTATION OF A 5-YEAR PLAN TO TELL VOTERS WHAT THEY CAN EXPECT AFTER THE MARCH 1978 ELECTIONS. BARRE WILL PLAY A MORE ACTIVE ROLE FROM NOW ON IN ATTEMPTING TO COORDINATE THE MAJORITY AND BELIEVES THAT RIVALRY AMONG FACTIONS CAN BE CONSIDERED LIMITED. WE BELIEVE THIS ROSY LOOK INTO THE FUTURE SHOULD BE READ WITH A HEAVY DOSE OF CAUTION. END SUMMARY.

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1. THE DEBATE: ACCORDING TO RAYMOND SOUBIE (PROTECT THROUGHOUT), RAYMOND BARRE'S COUNSELOR FOR SOCIAL AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS AND ONE OF THE FEW HOLD-OVERS IN THE MATIGNON FROM CHIRAC'S DAYS, THE MAJORITY'S ELECTION PROSPECTS HAVE BEEN GREATLY BUOYED BY THE BARRE-MITTERRAND TV DEBATE MAY 12 (PARIS 14201). IT IS TRUE THAT

MOST VIEWERS JUDGED BARRE THE "WINNER," BUT SOUBIE GOES MUCH FURTHER. THE PRIME MINISTER, WHO HAD BEEN PREPARING FOR THE DEBATE FOR MONTHS (PARTICULARLY BY READING THE PS LEFT-WING CERES REVIEW "REPERES"), FEELS JUSTIFIED IN HAVING CONCENTRATED ON ECONOMIC PROBLEMS FOR THE FIRST EIGHT MONTHS OF HIS TENURE AND IS NOW LOOKING TOWARDS A MEASURED, BUT STEPPED-UP POLITICAL ACTION PROGRAM. THIS STRATEGY AND TIMING IS FULLY CONSISTENT WITH WHAT BARRE HAS BEEN SAYING FROM THE BEGINNING: ATTACK THE ECONOMIC PROBLEMS RUTHLESSLY FIRST AND ADD A GROWING POLITICAL ELEMENT WHEN THE ECONOMIC GAMEPLAN STARTS TO PAY OFF (NEXT FALL). WHAT IS ALL IMPORTANT IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S MIND, SOUBIE SAID, IS TIMING. TO PEAK TOO SOON WOULD BE DISASTROUS; THIS IS WHY BARRE WAS HOLDING HIMSELF BACK UNTIL MAY 12, WHY HE WILL TAKE CERTAIN INITIATIVES BETWEEN NOW AND NEXT FALL AND THEN PLAY BIG-LEAGUE POLITICS BETWEEN SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER AND NEXT MARCH. THE FLOOD OF CONGRATULATORY LETTERS COMING IN TO THE MATIGNON SINCE MARCH 12 CONFIRM TO THE PRIME MINISTER THAT HIS HUNCH AND TIMING WERE RIGHT AND, MORE IMPORTANTLY, THAT THERE ARE MANY FRENCHMEN WHO WOULD VOTE LEFT IF THERE WEREN'T A GOOD ALTERNATIVE, BUT WHO NOW HOPE THAT BARRE WILL FURNISH THEM A CHOICE.

2. THE POLITICAL ACTION PLAN: SOUBIE PROVIDED SOME DETAILS OF THE TWO-STAGE PLAN, THE FIRST STAGE RUNNING FROM NOW UNTIL SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER. (A) RAYMOND BARRE WILL TRAVEL MORE OFTEN TO THE DIFFERENT REGIONS OF FRANCE AND DELIVER IMPORTANT, ATTENTION-GETTING SPEECHES. CONFIDENTIAL

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CHES. SOUBIE IMPLIED THAT THESE SPEECHES WOULD TREAT POLITICAL AS WELL AS ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL TOPICS, THE LATTER BEING HIS FOCUS TO DATE. (B) THE GOF WILL OPEN CONTRACTUAL NEGOTIATIONS, PERHAPS IN JUNE, WITH ALL UNIONS READY TO TAKE PART. THE FO, CGC AND CFTC WOULD PRESUMABLY ACCEPT, PERHAPS OTHERS ALSO. SOUBIE SAID THIS INITIATIVE WILL BE POSSIBLE BECAUSE THE GOF'S ECONOMIC PLAN WILL SOON SHOW IT IS WORKING WELL ENOUGH THAT THE 6.5 PERCENT LIMIT ON WAGE INCREASES CAN BE ADJUSTED. INFLATION, WHICH WAS 0.9 PERCENT IN MARCH AND IS EXPECTED TO BE WORSE FOR APRIL, WILL DECREASE AND LEVEL OFF FOR MAY THROUGH JULY, SOUBIE ADDED. THE GOF SHOULD ALSO BE ABLE TO REAP SOME PSYCHOLOGICAL ADVANTAGE IN TAKING THE INITIATIVE IN THESE NEGOTIATIONS, IN CONTRAST TO ITS DEFENSIVE POSTURE SINCE LAST FALL IN REFUSING TO HOLD OPEN-ENDED CONTRACTUAL NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE UNIONS. (C) BARRE WILL CONTINUE TO CAREFULLY NEGOTIATE HIS PARLIAMENTARY PROGRAM TO AVOID A CONFRONTATION AND BREAK WITH THE RPR. HE HAS ALREADY AGREED

TO POSTPONE THE EFFECTIVE DATE OF THE CAPITAL GAINS TAX

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-----182144Z 068556 /64

R 181834Z MAY 77  
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS  
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INFO AMCONSUL BORDEAUX  
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BILL FOR ONE YEAR AND HAS WITHDRAWN FOR MAJOR REVISION  
THE PROFESSIONAL TAX BILL (A REVISED VERSION WHICH WAS  
RECONSIDERED IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ON MAY 18).  
SOUBIE CLAIMED THERE ARE NO CONTENTIOUS BILLS FOR THE  
MAJORITY TO FIGHT OVER NOW BEFORE THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY.  
EVEN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT PROPOSAL HAS JUST NOW BEEN  
PUT INTO THE LEGAL TEXT OF A BILL, AND HE CONFESSED  
HE WAS NOT AT ALL SURE THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT WOULD BE  
INTRODUCED DURING THIS SESSION, AS HAS BEEN ANNOUNCED.

3. THE LONGER TERM: SOUBIE WAS MORE VAGUE ON THE  
SECOND STAGE OF BARRE'S POLITICAL PROGRAM, BEGINNING IN  
SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER. FIRST, IT WOULD BE A 5-YEAR PROGRAM  
(AS IS THE COMMON PROGRAM OF THE LEFT), IN ORDER TO EX-  
PLAIN TO THE ELECTORATE WHAT IT CAN EXPECT FROM THE  
MAJORITY IF REELECTED IN MARCH 1978. THE PRESENTATION  
OF THIS PROGRAM WILL MARK THE REAL KICK-OFF OF THE LE-  
GISLATIVE ELECTION CAMPAIGN. SECONDLY, VARIOUS GROUPS  
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CLOSE TO THE PRESIDENT AND PRIME MINISTER, PARTICULARLY AN INFORMAL GROUP CALLED "DEMOCRATIE FRANCAISE" AND A MORE FORMAL PRO-GISCARD ORGANIZATION "PERSPECTIVES ET REALITES", HAVE BEEN WORKING INTENSIVELY ON SUCH A PROGRAM FOR OVER A MONTH. FINALLY, THE PROGRAM WILL ADDRESS ITSELF TO SPECIFIC AND CONCRETE ISSUES, IN CONTRAST TO VGES BOOK OF PHILOSOPHICAL OBSERVATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

4. COORDINATION OF POLITICAL PROGRAM WITHIN MAJORITY: MUCH OF THE SUCCESS OF BARRE'S FUTURE PROGRAM WILL DEPEND ON HOW IT IS MANAGED WITHIN THE MAJORITY. (A) SOUBIE WAS NATURALLY OF THE OPINION THAT THE PRIME MINISTER WAS BY THE VERY NATURE OF HIS OFFICE THE COORDINATOR OF THE MAJORITY. BUT THIS FACT NEED NOT RESULT IN A CONFRONTATION WITH CHIRAC. IN SOUBIE'S VIEW, THE CHIRAC/BARRE RIVALRY OR POTENTIAL RIVALRY IS MUCH OVERPLAYED IN THE PRESS. INDEED, SINCE MARCH 12, BARRE HAS IN EFFECT TAKEN CHIRAC, DEBRE AND LABBE'S ADVICE TO ENGAGE HIMSELF IN THE POLITICAL BATTLE WITH THE LEFT. THEIR ADVICE WAS LONG STANDING; BARRE NEVER DISAGREED WITH IT, GRADUALLY WARMED UP TO IT BUT INSISTED ON PICKING HIS OWN TIME TO ACT. (B) THERE IS AMPLE ROOM WITHIN THE MAJORITY FOR A WIDE VARIETY OF PARTIES, WITNESS JJSS' RADICAL SOCIALISTS WHO ARE MAINTAINING THEIR DISTANCE FROM BOTH VGE AND CHIRAC. AS LONG AS THE VARIOUS PARTIES AGREE ON THE BASICS, INCLUDING THAT THE REAL OPPONENT IS THE LEFT, THEIR MULTIPLICITY WILL PROVE USEFUL IN APPEALING TO THE DIFFERENTIATED ELECTORATE WHICH TRADITIONALLY EXISTS IN FRANCE. (C) THE QUESTION OF INVESTITURES NEXT FALL FOR THE LEGISLATIVE DISTRICTS WILL BE THE ACID TEST OF WHETHER THE MAJORITY CAN STOP QUARRELING OVER QUESTIONS OF SECONDARY IMPORTANCE. SOUBIE EXPLAINED THAT THE CHOICE BETWEEN PRIMARIES AND AGREED-UPON CANDIDATES MAKES FOR INTERESTING THEORETICAL ARGUMENTS BUT THAT IN PRACTICE THE PROBLEM IS MUCH MORE

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SIMPLE. ONCE YOU ELIMINATE THE DISTRICTS WHICH WILL DEFINITELY GO TO THE LEFT AND THOSE WHERE THE MAJORITY INCUMBENT IS OBVIOUSLY THE STRONGEST CANDIDATE, YOU ARE LEFT WITH LESS THAN 100 DISTRICTS TO DECIDE. THE MAJORITY WILL AGREE TO A SINGLE CANDIDATE IN A GOOD NUMBER OF THESE, AND FOR THE REST PRIMARIES WILL NOT NECESSARILY BE A DETRIMENTAL EXPERIENCE. (COMMENT: THE QUESTION OF INVESTITURES IS VERY MUCH AN OPEN QUESTION AND

IT IS ENTIRELY POSSIBLE THAT MAJORITY INFIGHTING COULD

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BE BITTER OVER THIS ISSUE.)

5. SOCIAL CLIMATE: FOLLOWING LOGICALLY FROM THE ABOVE PRESENTATION, AND CONTRARY TO THE OPINION OF SOME OBSERVERS, SOUBIE DOES NOT EXPECT THE SOCIAL CLIMATE TO DETERIORATE BEFORE NEXT MARCH; AND THEREFORE HE DOES NOT EXPECT EARLY ELECTIONS. THERE WILL BE OCCASIONAL GENERAL STRIKES, POLITICALLY MOTIVATED AND FOR A VERY LIMITED PERIOD. BUT HE DOES NOT EXPECT A RECURRENCE OF MAY 24 SOON AFTER, BECAUSE THE CGT AND CFTD WILL PROBABLY HAVE A HARD TIME GETTING THE FO TO JOIN NEXT TIME AROUND AND THEY CANNOT AFFORD TO SHOW THEMSELVES LESS UNITED IN THE FUTURE THAN ON MAY 24. SPONTANEOUS, NON-POLITICAL STRIKES, HOWEVER, COULD OCCUR AND DRAG ON, BUT THEY RECEIVE ONLY BELATED SUPPORT FROM THE UNIONS. FOR THESE REASONS, SOUBIE DOES NOT RATE HIGH THE POSSIBILITY OF AN UNEXPECTED SOCIAL EXPLOSION BEFORE NEXT MARCH WHICH COULD JEOPARDIZE BARRE'S POLITICAL PROGRAM.  
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6. COMMENT: IF THESE RATHER OPTIMISTIC VIEWD DID NOT COME FROM ONE OF BARRE'S CLOSEST ADVISORS AND THEREFORE FAIRLY CLOSELY REFLECT THE PRIME MINISTER'S OWN PERSPECTIVE FOR THE NEXT YEAR, THEY WOULD NOT DESERVE A DETAILED ACCOUNT. AT THE SAME TIME, THE EMBASSY BELIEVES THE MAJORITY'S INTERNAL PROBLEMS, RIVALRIES, CONTRADICTIONS ARE CONSIDERABLY GREATER THAN SOUBIE ADMITS; AND THEIR PROSPECTS FOR MAKING UP LOST GROUND MORE DOUBTFUL. ONLY ONCE DID SOUBIE HINT THAT SERIOUS DIFFERENCES WILL HAMPER THE MAJORITY, AND EVEN HERE HE UNCONVINCINGLY EXPLAINED THAT OPEN DIFFERENCES WERE HEALTHIER THAN PAPERING-OVER, "AS IS THE CASE WITH THE LEFT." CERTAINLY THE EUPHORIA FELT IN THE MATIGNON AFTER THE MAY 12 DEBATE HAS SOMETHING TO DO WITH THIS ATTITUDE. BUT THE MEMORY OF THAT DEBATE WILL FADE IN A SHORT TIME, AND PRIME MINISTER BARRE WILL HAVE TO FOLLOW UP WEEK AFTER WEEK, MONTH AFTER MONTH TO CREATE THE SORT OF MOMENTUM THE MAJORITY WILL NEED BY THE END OF THE YEAR. WHILE BARRE'S PERSONAL PRESTIGE MAY RISE, THIS IS NO SUBSTITUTE FOR THE DETAILED GRASS ROOTS ORGANIZING EFFORT WHICH MUST BE UNDERTAKEN, AND ONLY JACQUES CHIRAC AND THE RPR APPEAR TO HAVE THE CAPABILITY OF ACHIEVING THIS. GAMMON

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## Message Attributes

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